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ABSTRACT

This speech expresses the view that changing educational facilities has had little effect on what happens between teachers and children; and that although the shell and shape of education has often changed, what goes on inside remains undisturbed. The body of the speech contains brief comments on a variety of topics, such as enrollment projections, open plan schools, community education, alternative schools, school space allocation, career education, construction management techniques, communitywide integration, educational finance, school size, and community participation. (MLF)

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THIRTEEN NEW APPROACHES AND OLD PROBLEMS
IN EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES PLANNING

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Facilities planning is the fashion industry of education. Because buildings are easy to change and America, as well as American Education, likes novelty, we have gone through 20 years or more of jumping off a band wagon headed in one direction to catch the next one going the opposite way. It is much harder to change education itself.

It is hard to change education, because we educators are programmed so thoroughly that teachers represent the most successful product of the training system. This is not to be confused with "success" as individuals. We went to school with the system. We stayed a long time in the system -- through college and graduate school. We returned and taught in the system. We are the system. We prescribe the system for others.

All the conversation about changing facilities for the most part, has had little or no effect on what happens between teachers and children. The easiest way to look as though you are a leader is to change the appearance of education and not the substance. The shell and shape of education has changed and changed again. That which goes on inside remains with few exceptions undisturbed.

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With some feeling of humility, then, we should take a look into the next few years and at those problems, panaceas, fashion shifts, and inspiring professional opportunities with which we might have to deal. I am going to touch on a number of topics in no particular order with a mixture of cynicism and hope, which is perhaps the mark of the endangered species called liberal.

1. THE BIRTH DEARTH

This is the recognition that most of the educational facilities planning has already been done, and that other than fixing up the old space to conform to the new look, and finding excuses for the reappearing empty seats, the game is largely over. The population is going to stabilize. The number of children in early grades of elementary school is dropping. As professionals you know the story. True there is remodelling and replacement. True, mobility of population still is making some change as the great middle class continues to flee from blacks, poverty, the problems of cities and its own shadow. Yet in community after community, there will be little need for new school facilities. College planners will wake up to this truth later.

Birth dearth is good news. The major financial problems of education of the last ten years have been symbolized by the replacement of the temporary euphoria of siring even more kids than the fellow next door with the horror that comes with the realization of what it costs when all eight of them are in college at the same time. Having large families is an economic luxury signaled by rapidly rising school taxes and, obviously, the schools were to blame.

We may have the chance, as enrollments subside, to pay off the bonds, to be able to return to an emphasis upon quality, and to be less efficient and therefore more effective in our use of educational space. There is no greater luxury than a room or two without assigned classes. This is also a test of the principal. Are the rooms locked, dark, and used

for storage or has an ebullient staff spilled kids and material into them.

2. LET'S SPECULATE ABOUT WHAT FOLLOWS THE OPEN PLAN OR WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU HAVE REMODELLED ALL THE FACTORIES IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT?

A most eloquent advocate of the importance of the environment in schools is David Medd, Principal Architect of the Department of Science and Education in Great Britain. I have compressed his article as he writes of the American open plan school:

.... "Here we have a factory floor with a hermetically sealed perimeter and regular disposition of heat, light, ventilation and services over the whole equal height ceiling area. Within this you have standard partitions which are movable....The only flexibility you have is the ability to change the relative areas of adjacent spaces when you decide to change some aspect of the school's organization from one system to another. You are in danger of having uniformity of character throughout. With your ubiquitous steel-faced standard partitions, your school may be like a warship stripped and readied for action. You have bought perpetual poverty....for the price of flexibility in the future....The offer of universal partition mobility is small consolation for a monotonous interior brightness, relieved only by fluorescent flicker and the 50-cycle hum." Then Medd turns to his view of education:

...."the school must attempt to do nothing less than instill a sense of wonder at the works of nature and man. To a child a school can provide the adventure of an unexplored country; it can be like a market round which you can browse -- there it all is, take in what you want; it can be like, in fact it can actually be, an exhibition in which the raw materials, the tools, the

machines, and the things that children, teachers, scientists, and craftsmen make are there to touch, to feel, to study, to read, to play with, to be inspired by and to wonder at.

... "I want a tiny dark space in which to work with photographic plates; I want a space in which the moving light of the sun can bring to life the forms and textures of the things I have made. I want a ceiling from which to hang a machine; I want a ceiling across which to flash and reflect my optical experiments. I want a wall whose texture, colour and pattern is a pleasure to contemplate; I want a wall on which I can hang a thousand books, or the local weaver's rugs. I want a tiny space in which I can be quiet and undisturbed with only a handful of people; I want a large tall space in which I can build a tower from which I can direct a light to acting groups below. I want a table on which I can balance an experiment; I want a chair in which I can curl up with a good book."

I wonder why all of us have succumbed to the monotony of open space, taking the easy way out of merely omitting partitions. In so doing we may have given up our birthright for a mess of carpet. We have given up the stimulation of environment. I wonder why the educational and the architectural professions gave up so easily?

3. CHRISTOPHER JENCKS OR "HARVARD HAS THE GLOOMS THIS YEAR."

This is the year of the muckraker and the inevitable cynical finding that nothing one does makes any difference. This all coincided with the time that Harvard ceased

being the seat of government. Cynicism is a fashion and, perhaps in the next administration or the next millenium, which ever comes first, the notion of improvement of the lot of mankind instead of Lockheed may come back into favor. Parenthetically, someone said recently that the present administration had moved, with respect to blacks and the poor from a posture of benign neglect to that of total neglect.

I think Mr. Jencks may be the Clifford Irving of Education. He has set up a straw man and knocked education for failing to do what he views as desirable. Through education, Jencks says in my grossly simplified version, all men should earn the same money. All men do not earn the same money. Ergo, education has failed.

Schools have been racked these years in being used as a tool to accomplish major social changes like integration and equality to which society is not really committed. Schools alone cannot do these things. Perhaps in the next few years we shall be realistic about what schools can do, drawing in the claims and concentrating upon accomplishing our own professional task. This brings me to:

4. COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The "in" thing this month is community education. One ambitious lad defines this as "a process that concerns itself with everything that affects the well-being of all citizens in a given community." Frankly, as I look around at us in education, I wouldn't trust you or me with that responsibility for a minute. We are in danger of leaping on yet another bandwagon, full of high purpose moving toward a dubious destination, while all around us in the real world our customers are much more concerned about getting all students up to average in reading.

There is a great opportunity in community education in reducing the cloistered effect of schools and breaking down some of the barriers between schools and community. But don't get carried away.

Community education should be made up of a series of discreet steps to interrelate schools and community where the process makes sense to both. We must avoid saturating a community with children for, after all, we are being paid to keep the kids out of the house and out of the work force. The service action-learning program of the National Association of Secondary School Principals may become a most effective effort in this field.

5. ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

I find alternative education or alternative schools an interesting and, in some respects a novel concept. The novelty lies in the improbable notion that there is more than one true path to Valhalla in education. It recognizes the fact that every time we find the educational Holy Trail that is the final answer to all our problems, the technique works for some kids but not for others.

Perhaps there is a sophistication coming to education when within a school or a school system we learn to provide for differing speeds of learning and differing styles of learning, perhaps even moving toward a professionally determined, individually applied, optimum mix. On the other hand, there is nothing more chilling than to see our heavy handed movement toward individualized instruction expressed as: "Everyone go through the workbook at your own speed." We are rushing back to paper and pencil tests or an all day basis at an alarming speed.

6. AUCTIONING OFF SPACE

Evergreen Park High School, in the Chicago area, has adopted an interesting way of dealing with space. The high school was crowded and additional space was secured. Instead of allocating new space to departments or some other function, the faculty, either individually or in groups, were invited to submit proposals for use of the space which would allow programs to be instituted that could demonstrably contribute to the achievement of goals that the school had set for itself. The proposals indicated the time span necessary to prove the value of the ideas, ways of evaluating what would be done and the necessary outfitting of space. The total faculty evaluated the proposals in estimating the contribution the work would make to achievement of the goals and awarded the winners the requisite space on a short term, renewable lease.

7. CALVIN TAYLOR

Calvin Taylor is a psychologist at the University of Utah who has been calling out, unheard, in the wilderness that schools really teach only an academic talent. He points out that there are many talents beyond the academic talent, such as creativity, management, communication and the like, that schools do not really pay attention to and these may be more critical talents than the academic one. In a sense, he accuses schools of concentrating on a ritual, ceremonial role in its academic orientation and neglecting critically important functions that humans must perform in the real world.

Perhaps, in the kind of thinking that Taylor symbolizes will come a better model for education, one that if followed may create a difference, despite, or, in a sense, supporting Jencks and all the others who say nothing succeeds. Perhaps our ostensible

failures came about simply because we have done nothing but tinker with the old model.

8. CAREER EDUCATION

One of the dying gasps of the Office of Education just before it was put out of its misery was the effort to turn all of education toward Career Education and the "work ethic". Whether this program will go up when the funds go down remains to be seen. Surely anything that gives an inner-city student increased competence to get out and hold a job is great. Career Education is one area where I believe accountability could be applied. This is the kind of accountability that requires the schools to provide the skills, the students the enthusiasm and the community the jobs. All three are accountable.

Any honest adherence to the goals of career education requires major educational modifications along the line. Much more is called for than the really inadequate school administrator concept of area vocational centers. School-business and school-industry cooperative efforts, unions included, seem more related to success. The Minuteman Vocational High School in Concord, Massachusetts with its individual path through common tools seems promising.

9. DESIGN/BUILD/FAST TRACKING/CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT GAMES

Recently a much-advertised fast track, construction management series of projects was built at more cost, taking a longer time, than a comparable conventional project started at the same time in the same school system. Recently in a design/build competition the award went to one of its higher bids. Was there that much difference

in the project? Are there appropriate controls and objective systems of judgment to assure a school board that they will not be sued for squandering money under the circumstances? Recently, one state got gun-shy of fast-tracking because, as they went down the road of contract award after contract award, their money was used up before the roof or some other important thing went on the building.

I would advise extreme caution. There is no doubt that in these more sophisticated management techniques, used consistently and honestly, there is much to offer schools facing construction projects. The development of adequate safeguards is, however, to my mind imperative.

10. DESEGREGATION AND PRESIDENT NIXON

Louis Kohlmeier in the Chicago Tribune a few weeks ago forecast the effort of the Nixon administration to appeal to enough black voters to further impair the ability of the Democrats to get elected. Mr. Kleindienst has spoken of the need for Congress to create a "national standard" of integration that would apply to North and South alike. He thought such legislation should require school rezoning and new school construction before busing.

All this says that integration is not dead in the North and, in justice, it should not be. I have watched Southern cities with equal ratios of black and white stoutly try to make it work. The North has been eager to have the South integrated. Will Chicago come next? It seems to me that it is abundantly clear that school integration, when it is the only tool used, will never bring about that better society where

men, or rather persons, are valued for what they are, not for their color, or national origin, or religion, or even, politics. The next moves toward integration must be community wide. The next move must be made.

11. RODERIGUEZ

Whether or not the Supreme Court rules that there must be a reshaping of the financial structure of education, in my judgment there will be such a revision. The question is whether or not the attempt to equalize educational financing will help or hurt. It is interesting to note that the major legislation of social change is taking place, not in the legislature of this country but in its courts. I would hope that these issues be met head-on by legislative process rather than by giving this prerogative, by default, to the legal profession with its advanced capability of fouling up the process.

Watching one state deal with full state funding of construction, resulting in a huge concentration of outlay of funds, and seeing the beleaguered governmental leaders deal with the legislature, I think we may throw out the baby with the bath water. The easy legal notion that the state will make superior decisions and will fund programs on their merit disappears under the pressure for quotas, allocation of space per child on a restrictive formula; development of statewide formulae for library size and number of toilets and all the rest. Our rush to legal relief and avoidance of the long term process of legislative relief will surely prove to be disastrous.

12. SIZE GOT YOU DOWN

There is really nothing funnier than to watch states push reorganization of school systems to provide larger "more efficient" schools on one hand and offer

incentives to large school systems to decentralize.

There is a truism that no consolidation saved money. It shifted money.

The notion that a large high school is more efficient is preposterous, except as we in education fail to use our heads when dealing with small size.

Conant was flat out wrong, wrapped in an academic blanket, limited by an acceptance of the given that schools must operate in classes and that in order to have a class of 20 in second year physics, you must have 600 in beginning science. There are so many other ways to work out the problems of variety in offering and limits on numbers.

As we move from housing numbers to achieving educational quality, I will be willing to bet that the small school will figure in the answer.

13. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Try it! You'll like it! And it will help to keep you honest. Only be sure you really have tried to get the community involved; all of it, including the poor, the outcast, the not so nice and not so easily managed kind of community. It's tough and brawling and you never know who "the community" is but it sure is an exhilarating way to go.

Space and time forces me to leave out:

14. TELESCOPING TIME IN EDUCATION - AN EMERGING CHARACTERISTIC OF HIGH SCHOOL - COLLEGE

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15. COMMUNAL EDUCATION
16. BENJAMIN BLOOM'S ARTICLE "INNOCENCE IN EDUCATION"
ONE OF THE SMALL, SEMINAL, ELEGANT PIECES OF OUR TIME
17. AND ON AND ON.

See our next thrilling installment.